1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)
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land. The *Ten'dan*' of Bade also told *Misore* about the festival of the 'bad water-moon.'[1]

The Territorial Ruler: The position of the territorial rulers among the Talense appears to be so similar to that already described when discussing the neighbouring tribe, the Nankanse, as to leave little or nothing to add to what has been recorded. The Talense Chiefs go to Kurugu for their 'red fez.' When a vacancy occurs, there is a scramble among those eligible to fill the vacancy, one vying with another for the post, which, as likely as not, falls to the highest bidder. This method of selection would appear to have very little to recommend it, save that it appears to have been in vogue before our advent in these parts. No doubt it does not 'pay' the Chief, in whose hands the selection lies, to appoint a man who is wholly unacceptable to the people, and the 'presents' tendered on these occasions seem to have been a recognized and not unimportant portion of the revenues accruing to a head Chief. The custom becomes, perhaps, more subject to abuse when we find it practised in turn by the lesser Chiefs in the appointment of the *kambon na*, who, as I have already stated, often seem to usurp the positions which should by right be held by the section-leaders.

In an old 'District Record Book,' at Zuargu, under a date of nearly twenty years ago, I found a note, of which the following is an extract. It refers, I think, more especially to those Chiefs whom I have named 'Government-made-Chiefs': 'The people look with suspicion on any one who prospers and becomes the owner of property, or on any of their so-called 'Chiefs,' who, backed up by us, "put on airs," and try to assume control over the people. The Chiefs have no prestige, no historical names to quote as their predecessors.' This is as true to-day as it was twenty years ago.

The position of the head of a family and of other members of his household among the Talense does not exhibit any features with which we are not already familiar. The following is an additional note on pawns.

Talem (pawns): A man may want to get money to become a Chief and pawn (verb, *nwe talema*) his son. If he is head of a house, he need not ask any one's permission; if not, he will consult his father or elder brother. 'A pawn's head is not shaved as is a slave's.' A boy is pawned for from one to four cows. The debtor is *sandan*, the creditor *bondam*. If the *talem* dies, the *sandan* still has to pay. Famine might cause a man to pawn or sell his son. 'If you sell any one, you give the *Ten'dan*' a goat or a fowl because the land does not agree to that (*tey npu sayera*.)'

[1] See Chapter XXVI.

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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Lineage Grouping and Local Grouping

613 We come now to the question of the connexion between lineage
621 grouping and locality. A lineage like Nəpugzabər yiri, though its span
596 is comparatively small, exhibits all the important principles of lineage structure and will suffice as a crucial example.

In all the old-established settlements we find a very close correlation between lineage proximity and residential proximity among the members of the clan who live there. Close agnates tend to live near one another, so that residential proximity is almost a measure of lineage proximity. A segment of small span tends to be a close residential cluster, and segments of larger span, up to the major segments of a maximal lineage, tend to form residential blocks.

We can see this most readily if we look again at the residential dispersion of a group of agnatically related joint families, bearing in mind that the men of a joint family form a lineage. For as the homestead is the material integument of the living structure of the joint family, so is the localization of the lineage, growing out of the spatial arrangement of the homestead, the spatial counterpart of the lineage structure.

592 As will be remembered (see p. 199), the elementary case is that of two
full (*soog*) brothers, who often continue to occupy a single homestead
602 long after they have set up separate families. Each will have more or less
596 self-contained quarters, but the homestead will have only one gateway (*zanər*), one cattle-yard (*sapak*), and one room for the family head (*zəŋ*), signifying that it is a single homestead. Half-brothers (*sunzəp*) may share a homestead in this way, but they usually separate more distinctly when they have growing families. Each will have his own gateway, &c., and party walls divide his section of the homestead completely from those of his brothers, making it what may be called a semi-detached homestead. Such a set of semi-detached homesteads may house a man and his mature first-born son, or a man and his deceased brother's sons. Sometimes two or more ortho-cousins (brothers, in native terminology) live thus side by side.

613 More usually, however, men whose nearest common ancestor is a grand-
621 father occupy completely separate dwellings, often very near to one another. Men whose nearest common ancestor is a great-grandfather never have permanent homes adjoining one another in this semi-detached way. These conditions of residence signalize successive stages of segmentation as the effective minimal lineage expands and splits into new effective minimal lineages. But what residential arrangements will prevail in a particular lineage segment depends, also, upon other circumstances, the most important of which are the economic and religious relations, and the character and disposition of the individuals concerned. Residential collocation is not a simple function of lineage relationship. There is a *tertium quid* linking them: the combined effect of land tenure, on which the whole economy of the household rests, and of the ancestor cult. For example, when a joint family splits, the man who leaves the ancestral home usually builds a homestead for himself on land belonging to the

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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CHAPTER III

THE HOMESTEAD AND THE JOINT FAMILY

Homestead and Family—a Single Social Entity

361 PHYSICALLY a Tale settlement is an aggregation of homesteads irregularly distributed at varying distances from one another.[1] A 592 homestead is the domicile of a domestic family. The edifice of pile and thatch, and its occupants, constitute a single entity. There is no word for either apart from the other. The native concept, *yir* (pl. *yɛa*), a house, means primarily the joint family as a coherent social unit residing in its own dwelling. An unoccupied homestead is a dead shell, left to crumble into ruins.

592 When a homestead is abandoned it becomes a *daboog* (pl. *dabaar*), a word applied both to an empty homestead in any stage of decay and to the site of a former homestead, and carrying two main and complementary implications that spring directly from the dominance of the lineage principle in Tale social values. *Daboog* stands for something good and worthy of praise when it refers to the site of a person's father's or grandfather's homestead, or, by extension, to the site or locality of an ancestor's homestead. A *daboog* in this sense is a symbol of the origins and a portent of the good fortune of an existing lineage; it is an object of personal attachment and religious reverence; though vacant it is not dead; the spirits of the ancestors still abide there, and it may be reoccupied some day; it is a symbol of the living continuity of a line of descent. *Daboog* can also be used to describe the site of a former human habitation left deserted and forlorn through the extinction of a line of descent. No ancestor spirits dwell there; it is an accursed spot, a monument of human sin, and a symbol of the most terrible mystical retribution that can befall a Talaŋ. A curse one sometimes hears uttered when a grave injury has been suffered at the hands of an unknown person is: 'May his house lie in ruins and tobacco be grown there (*K'u yir doon daboog ka ba cy taba waal nɛyha*).' A ruined homestead provides an exceptionally fertile patch of soil, suitable for growing tobacco. If a man's line of descent is extinguished, there will be no one to claim ownership of his *daboog*, and anyone who wishes will come and plant tobacco there.

592 A homestead is always built for a particular family. From the day 769 when the site is chosen it is the scene of human labour, of organized co-operation, and of religious and moral preoccupations. It must be lived in from the laying of the foundations, lest evil mystical agencies desecrate it. Ancestor shrines are immediately installed in it; for the spirits of a man's fathers and forefathers abide in his house, presiding

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. x.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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over its destinies just as they controlled its social and economic activities in their lifetime.

A new homestead is erected for preference on the site of a man's father's or other patrilineal ancestor's *daboog*. Such a site is consecrated through having been the scene of human residence in the past, and through the abiding association with it of the ancestors who formerly lived there. If a man builds on virgin land, the site must not only be technically prepared for habitation, it must also be ritually won for human ends. Hence the tendaana under whose ritual jurisdiction the spot falls must first consecrate it, and the new dwelling must be magically protected against those vague personifications of irrational maleficence, mystically dangerous stones (*kubeet*) and trees (*tebees*). So complete is the identification of the family with its dwelling, that if persistent misfortune dogs the family after its removal to a new homestead, and all other ritual measures seem to have failed, the onus is finally thrown on the homestead itself. 'The house has not accepted them (*yiŋ la pu diebame*)', the diviners discover. The whole complex of mystical agencies which endow the house with its moral value for the family is against them.

In the single homestead, as in the settlement of which it is the elementary cell and the structural epitome, Tale social organization has three fundamental aspects—material, associational, and moral. They represent the three major kinds of interests and ends that govern Tale social life. And though all forms of social relations among the Tallensi always have these three classes of components, they do not always work in harmony with one another.

In the homestead, as in the settlement, social relations move in two planes: the plane of lineage relations, in which the canon of agnatic descent dominates corporate action and directs individual conduct, and the plane of domestic relations, in which the bonds of marriage and parenthood, and the bilateral ties of kinship in the narrowest sense, control the behaviour of people towards one another. The persons who form a unit in one plane fall into separate, opposed units in the other. Husband and wife belong to mutually exclusive lineages; brothers by the same father but different mothers belong to separate matricentral segments of the family and are nuclei of independent conjugal families.

The Ideas and Values embodied in the Homestead

It is far truer of the Talɔŋ than of the modern Englishman to say that his home is his castle, though not as literally as Cardinall imagines. The natives of these parts, he declares, build their homesteads solidly and a bow-shot apart in order the better to defend them against hostile neighbours.[1] This romantic explanation, however, has

[1] Cardinall, A. W., *Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast*, pp. 2, 14.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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no foundation in fact. The climate, the kind of raw material which is plentifully at hand, the economic system, and the social organization of the natives rather than the alleged lawlessness of former times, determine their mode of house-building. In any case, homesteads very often stand closer than fifty paces together, the distance at which a mediocre shot can hit a tree—though I have seen an arrow carry four times that distance.

A Talǝŋ's home is his castle in the psychological rather than the material sense. It is the centre and fount of his major interests, his dominant purposes, his deepest emotional attachments, and his whole scheme of values; it is his shelter, his storehouse, the stage of his life's drama. The Tallensi, unlike many African peoples, have no age sets or initiation schools. A person grows up and receives his entire education at home. If he practises a craft, such as leatherwork, or is a diviner, his home is his workshop or consulting place.

As an adult, all his economic enterprise issues from his home and is devoted primarily to its upkeep. Unless he is one of the few *nouveaux riches* of to-day he keeps all his material possessions there, and houses all his livestock within its walls. His sex life, in maturity, is centred there. His children, the supreme object of his aspirations, are born and grow up in his home under his care and control. He worships his immediate forbears there. His personal destiny, past, present, and future, revolves about his home, its stages perpetuated in the many shrines and other ritual objects that are housed in it. He receives his friends and relatives at home, and dispenses hospitality there; and if he has nothing to do would as lief recline under the shade tree at his own gateway as go making calls on others. Even the young men who like gallivanting about the markets spend much of their leisure at home.

The quintessence of his home, to a Talǝŋ, resides in his children, and above all his sons, the vehicles of his immortality. That is the essential meaning of *mar yiri*, 'to have a house'. Ask any native what happens to a man who does not adequately expiate a sacrilege such as murder. '*U yiri ŋmaarǝmǝ*—his house will fall to pieces,' is the answer, given with emphatic and solemn conviction, and often with circumstantial illustrations from experience or hearsay. A parent curses an insubordinate child, a chief or tendaana curses a clansman who has grossly insulted him, '*u ku nye yiri*—he will not see (i.e. have) a house', that is, he will die without offspring to perpetuate his line and to sacrifice to his spirit; and this is an extremely serious matter. It never fails to bring the culprit to heel with humble apologies. On the other hand, '*i na nye yiri*—you will have a house', is the most propitious blessing a diviner can convey to a man from his ancestor spirits.

Patrilocal residence and the tendency for the lineage to be localized give a man's domestic life greater continuity than a woman's. His natal family and his conjugal family are both strung on the same

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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lineage. The latter grows directly out of the former and very often occupies the same dwelling as, or one close to that of, the former. For a woman marriage signifies a sharp break. As wife and mother she generally lives in a different, even if familiarly close, clan settlement from that of her birth. A man, living all his life side by side with the other members of his lineage, participating in the hierarchy of the corporate units that make up the lineage system, identifying himself with all its members through their common jural, economic, and ceremonial interests, makes an easy, self-evident, and gradual transition from the status of a minor (*tarəm*) under his father's control to that of a father and head of a household. The change in status and social role from that of a daughter and member of one lineage to that of a wife and mother in the settlement of another is more drastic and complex. A woman has no rights in or ties with the community[1] in which she spends the greatest part of her life, exercises her heaviest responsibilities, achieves her most cherished fulfilments, and acquires her strongest emotional attachments, except through her family by marriage, her husband, and her children. Thus a woman's life is fraught with many possibilities of conflict between the loyalties and sentiments towards her natal lineage and those which she gradually builds up in relation to her husband's lineage.

The effect of all this is to make the home of even greater importance for a woman than for a man. Her conjugal home is the supreme and almost the sole domain of her labour and life. Her children are the very hub of her existence. She is first and foremost a housewife and mother, toiling devotedly in the care of her children, in attending to her husband's needs, in giving her contribution of labour and skill to the economy of the household, and in the numerous household tasks that call for daily attention.

The Architecture of the Homestead in Relation to the Structure of the Domestic Family

Tale homesteads are solidly constructed of pile (puddled mud, *tan*), and they are built to last. Erecting the circular walls tier by tier, plastering them, roofing the rooms, stamping the floors, adding the small contrivances and the decorations that increase the comfort and attraction of the homestead, are all tasks requiring considerable skill, care, and co-operation. They are not the work of specialists, though some men and women have more skill in them than others, and many people have such poor skill that they never undertake them. The conventional division of labour involves both sexes equally in the building of a homestead. Building and thatching is men's work; plastering, drawing the crude lines and geometrical designs that

[1] She may, and usually does, have cognatic kinsfolk there, but her ties with them are valid only for the particular individuals.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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decorate the walls, and stamping the floors into smooth, hard surfaces are all women's work. According to its size and the number of workers available, from the commencement to the final touches, it takes from three weeks to two months of intermittent but often strenuous labour to build a homestead. This falls chiefly on its future occupants. All the members of the family, including the children, lend a hand. But co-members of the owner's clan, especially of his own local segment and their wives, as well as kinsmen, affines, and friends, lend their services too, and this involves considerable expenditure of foodstuffs to reward them.

Again, substantial as they are, Tale houses are not impervious to the weather, with its drastic alternation of great heat and drought and heavy rains. After a couple of years the soaking rains of July and August begin to wear the walls away, rot the thatch, and pit the floors. A man who wants to keep his homestead in trim condition must do some repairs every dry season. New rooms may be added from time to time, if the family grows in numbers, or old rooms allowed to fall in if it diminishes. With such alterations and repairs, a homestead may stand for a generation. In the older settlements many sites have been occupied for two or three generations continuously, the homesteads having been completely rebuilt, bit by bit, several times during this period.

Building a new homestead is an outstanding event in the life of its owner and a matter of public attention. It always marks a significant change in a man's status—his economic and jural emancipation from minority, or his attainment of eldership high up in the lineage hierarchy. Hence it requires moral sanction and ritual precautions. As we have seen, it also mobilizes all the basic social ties a man has. The house itself, embodying the labour and care of himself, his family, and many of his relatives by blood and marriage, stands as a monument to the efficacy of these social ties.

We can see why the Tale homestead, looked at merely from the architectural aspect, is the material projection of the social relations that make up the domestic family. All Tale homesteads have the same architectural pattern, just as all Tale domestic families have the same basic structure. Only in one point of style and construction do Tale homesteads differ in type, and this is not a question of taste. The Tallensi have two kinds of roofs, a conical thatched roof lashed on to a frame of rafters, and a flat roof of beaten pile supported on a ceiling of strong rafters. The thatch roof is the easier to make and the most common. But nearly every thatched homestead has at least one flat-roofed room (*pii*), as a matter both of convention and of utility. It is the scene of many activities in the dry season. Men, women, and children sit or sprawl on the roof to rest, to chat, or when they are busy with some sedentary task such as sewing or spinning. Grain, vegetables, and edible leaves are spread out to dry there. On

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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sultry nights the head of the house often makes up his bed there. When his grain is ripening on the home farm he climbs on to the *pii* every morning to survey it, and often stands there to keep an eye open for stray animals likely to spoil it. There is always an ancestor shrine or two on the flat roof, as it is the appropriate place for a *yin* shrine in the earliest stage of its evolution; and it is from the flat roof that the alarm call, *yaahi! yaahi!* is broadcast when a death occurs or something untoward happens for which the immediate assistance of neighbours is needed.

But some homesteads must be flat-roofed throughout, though the cost in time and labour is great. For this is a taboo (*kihor*) of the Earth in some places. Almost all the senior tendaanas are therefore obliged to have all their rooms flat-roofed; and at Wakii and Tenzugu all houses within the acknowledged precincts of the principal Earth shrines (*tɔŋgbana*) of these places must be flat-roofed throughout. This affects the design and construction of the homestead in many details, but not in its basic pattern.

A homestead reveals much to the instructed eye. Its appearance and condition often betray the character, capabilities, social position, and experience of the owner and his wife or wives. The Golibdaana of Tenzugu and the Yikpemdaana of Gorogo each have a large rectangular room of sun-dried bricks, built for them by boys trained at the White Fathers' Mission at Bolɔga, and used as sanctum, private storeroom, and personal sleeping-quarters. They are both wealthy, ambitious, upstart headmen, whose political and economic privileges are wholly dependent on the white man's rule. Hence, though themselves illiterate and of the generation that reached maturity before British rule became established, they are 'progressives', alert to useful or merely pretentious innovations that add to their prestige or bolster up their self-assurance. The Tɔŋraana, or, to go outside Taleland, the Nangodi na'aba, wealthy men too in virtue of their political role under the British Administration, but deriving their authority from the native social structure, do not require adventitious props to their prestige. Their private rooms are built in native style, with the useful addition of a rough plank door fastened with a padlock. A plank door is a rarity in Taleland, and very hard to come by. If a room in a commoner's homestead is fitted with one, it may be inferred that some member of the family has been abroad a good deal or has close connexions with people who are or have been in Ashanti, in the Colony, or in European service.

Most Tallensi take great pride in the appearance of their homesteads. A dilapidated homestead indicates that its owner is poor or infirm or lazy, and therefore unable to provide the foodstuffs to recompense relatives who might be asked to help him repair it. A good-for-nothing like Yelnaar of Tɔŋ-Puhug has a tumbledown dwelling which his neighbours point to with scorn. A man of more self-respect would be

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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[facing p. 49]

PLATE 4

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a. The central granary in the homestead of an elder. Note the array of ancestor shrines on the granary. The granary is about 10 ft. high and 5 ft. in diameter at the base

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b. In the *Dendugo* of the senior woman of the family. The infant children of several wives of the family left in the care of one of them. (This is the homestead of the head of a medial lineage. Note the lineage *boyas* against the wall on the left, part of it supported on a tree-stump and part on the floor in shallow pottery dishes)

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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ashamed of it and exert himself to the utmost to have it repaired. But a poor man who has the energy and can himself build and thatch, or has a son or sons skilled in these crafts, will generally keep his homestead in a satisfactory condition. On the other hand, even men who own cattle and sheep are apt to wait until the thatch is rotted through and the walls collapse before undertaking essential repairs. The ingrained thrift of the natives, fostered by their narrow margin of sufficiency in food-supplies, induces them often to submit to discomfort which would tax less hardy folk to breaking-point rather than expend food and other resources to alleviate it.

Indoors, Tale homesteads are usually surprisingly tidy. A good housewife sees that her quarters are swept every morning. Litter indoors is a sign that the mistress of those rooms is a lazy or a sick woman, or one too harassed by family cares or poverty to look after her home properly. A good housewife has her floors regravelled and beaten almost every year to keep them hard and smooth.

But individual idiosyncrasies do not affect the layout of a homestead; for apart from minor variations this depends wholly on the constitution of the domestic unit. The layout of a homestead is an index to the structure of the domestic family occupying it.

The simplest domestic and procreative unit is the elementary family—a man, his wife, and their young children—occupying their own homestead. Often the man's mother (*ma*), either his own mother (*ma dɔŋarug*—the mother [of] bearing), or a surviving co-wife (*nentaa*) of his mother lives with him. The whole group constitutes one household, that is, a single economic unit all the members of which are mutually dependent on one another for the production of their common food-supply and the satisfaction of most other wants. Essentially this is a matter of pooling labour and skill, of utilizing land in common, of drawing on the food, livestock, and to some extent monetary resources built up by joint effort, for the benefit of any member of the unit, and of mutual assistance from any private resources that the members may have.

A good example of a domestic family of this kind is that of Ɔndieso of Tɔŋ-Guŋ, a man in the late thirties whose homestead stands on the border of Tɔŋ-Dekpieŋ and Gbizug. Outside his homestead, 10 or 12 yards from the gateway, stands the usual shade tree. Ɔndieso's tree is also, like almost all shade trees, an ancestor shrine. Between it and the gateway is a bare space, with the midden heap (*tampɔŋar*) on one side and a large, round, flat-topped ancestor shrine built of pile on the other. It is the shrine of his late father's *Yin*. One or more ancestor shrines stand thus at the entrance to every homestead. '*Ɔn nso yirla*—it owns the house', the natives say, meaning by this a spiritual and not material ascendancy in the affairs of the family. It stands outside, at the entrance, as a spiritual sentry guarding the welfare of the house.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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If the head of the house is still junior in status in the lineage hierarchy, as Ɔndieso is, it will be the shrine dedicated to his father's Destiny (*yin*), or it may be his father's divining (*bakologo*) shrine. The house is still under the spiritual jurisdiction of Ɔndieso's dead father, though he himself now owns it in the temporal sense. A man of greater social maturity, with grown children and higher lineage status, would very likely have his own *yin* or *bakologo* shrine at his gateway. His house is established; it is no longer the fulfilment of his father's destiny, as is the house of a young man, though it may still be known by his father's or grandfather's name. For as long as a homestead remains standing it is known by the name of the man who first built it.

A bird's-eye view would show a homestead as covering a roughly circular or oval area (Figs. 2*a* and 2*b*). The space in front of the gateway (*zanɔne*—at the gateway) belongs pre-eminently to the menfolk. The public phases of funeral and mortuary ceremonies, which are corporate concerns of the lineage and are conducted by the men, take place there. When anything touching the rights, duties, or interests of the head of the family in his capacity as a member of a particular lineage calls for consultation with fellow members of the lineage, the *zanɔne* is the gathering place. It is the proper place for him to receive greetings, condolences, or congratulations, and to conduct formal negotiations in a matter such as the payment of bride-price owed to him or by him. In the dry season he often rests there, beneath the shade tree, during the sweltering afternoon, chatting with a friend or fondling an infant left in his charge while its mother is busy indoors. Women of the house come and go freely, and often sit or lounge about in front of the gateway; but when 'an affair of the men (*buraas yɛl*)' is in progress they keep away.

The gateway (*zanɔr*) always faces west to south-west, 'where the sun sets (*nintaŋ nhuut*)'. This is a convention never broken by the Tallensi, though they have neither a naturalistic explanation nor a mystical rationalization for it, and it is not subject to mystical sanctions.[1]

The gateway is a V-shaped opening, about a foot wide at the base and 3 to 4 feet wide on top, between two round pillars (*meelɔŋ*) forming part of the wall of the house. Large irregularly spaced holes are made in these pillars for short logs to be inserted at night as cross-bars against which a heavy, hollow board (*bchuŋ*), cut from a tree-trunk, or a bundle of poles can be leaned to close the gateway. Tallensi say that they build the gateway thus in order to bar it the more securely against the

[1] As the rain-bearing winds blow from the south-east, and the tornadoes that begin and end the rainy season come from an easterly direction, it is possible that the placing of the doorway on the western side of the house is an adaptation to this feature of the climate. Anyone who has experienced the discomfort of a tornado whirling straight into a room, or of a heavy rain, in this region will appreciate the usefulness of placing the only entrance into a homestead on the lee side. But no native has ever given me this obvious explanation, though this may be due to inadequate inquiries on my part.

[Text is continued on p. 54.—Analyst]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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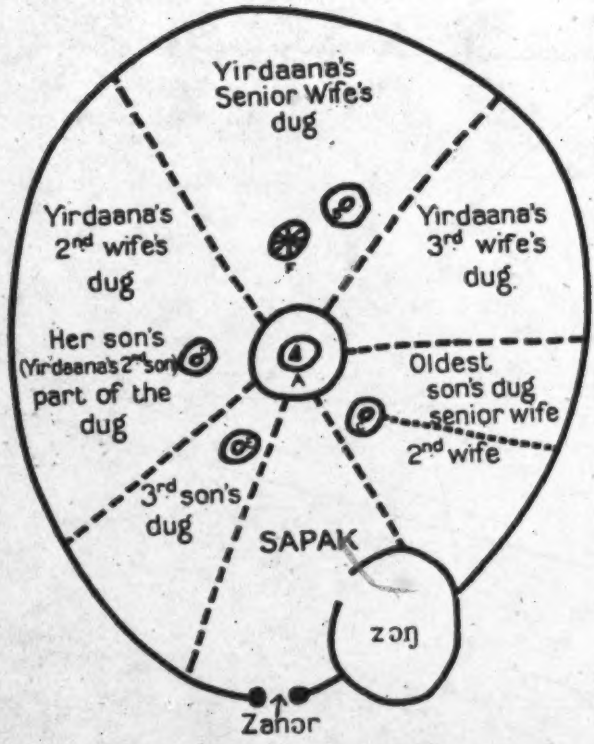

FIG. 2*a*. Diagram (not to scale) showing the layout of the different *dugsi* in a large joint family homestead. The head of the homestead (*yirdaana*) has three living wives and three married sons, one with two wives.

A — Principal granary (*buur tenta'ar*) of the *yirdaana*
B — Small granary belonging to *yirdaana*
C — Oldest son's private small granary
D — Second son's private small granary
E — Third son's private small granary
F — *Yirdaana's Yin* shrine

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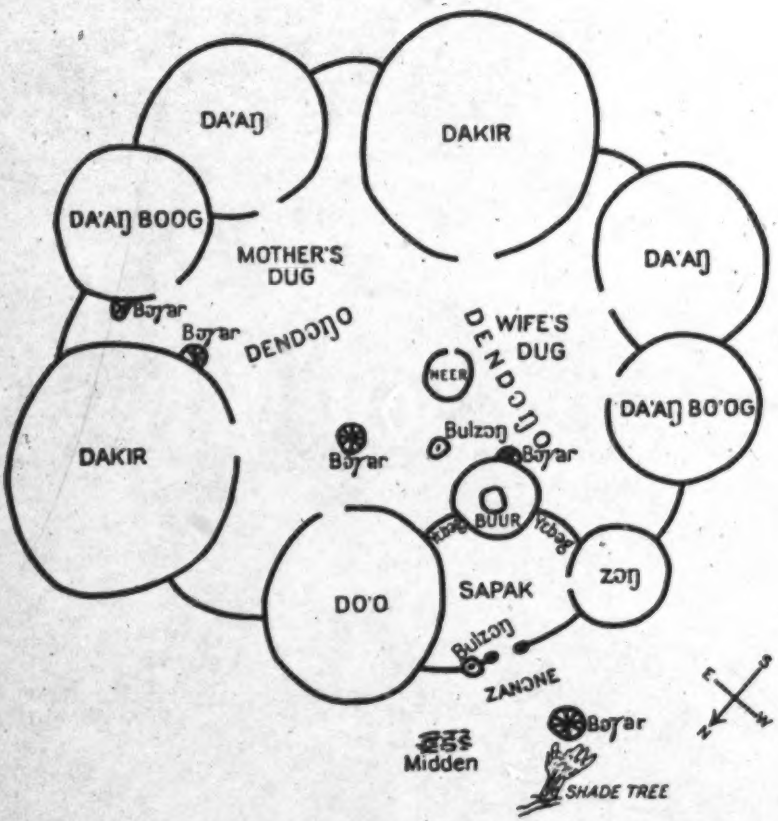

FIG. 2*b*. Diagram of Ɔndieso's homestead, showing the layout of the quarters and the rooms. (Scale: 1:45 approx.)

Glossary

Bɔŋar	Ancestor shrine
Buur	Granary
Bulzɔŋ	Shelter for hens
Da'aŋ	Unroofed dry-season kitchen
Da'aŋboog	Storeroom and wet-season kitchen
Dakir	Sleeping-room
Do'o	Room for adolescent boys
Dendɔŋo	Open courtyard
Sapak	Livestock yard
Zanɔne	Open space at the gateway where the men foregather
Zɔŋ	The homestead head's special room
Neer	Grinding-room
Yebəg	Low dividing wall

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the *zɔŋ*, they symbolize the continuity of the lineage of which the master of that house is but one member, a link in a process to which he makes his greatest contribution as a father and head of a house. Hence the *zɔŋ* of a lineage head, being the sanctuary of all the lineage ancestors, is regarded as the *zɔŋ* of the whole lineage, and his *zanɔr* as the *zanɔr* of the lineage. When the Hill Talis were forcibly expelled in 1910–11 and their homesteads demolished, the heads of the maximal lineages later came back by stealth to rebuild a small part of their *zɔŋ* walls, for they could not appropriately sacrifice to their lineage ancestors elsewhere than in the lineage *zɔŋ*. If a woman commits adultery, she sins against her husband's lineage ancestors, thus imperilling the health and welfare of her husband and children. An adulteress, that is to say, transgresses the rights over her reproductive powers vested absolutely in her husband's lineage. Thus, if a woman is suspected of adultery she is subjected to the ordeal of entering (*kpe*) the lineage *zɔŋ* or *zanɔr*. She must face the ancestors directly, for she has committed an outrage against the lineage principle the absolute value of which is symbolized in and safeguarded by the ancestor spirits.[1] If she is guilty and does not confess, she will get ill and perhaps die. Women are terrified of this ordeal, which rarely fails to produce a confession.

Though they come and go freely in the *sapak* and *zɔŋ* in the ordinary course of domestic life, the women and children belong specifically to the domestic quarters proper. These lie behind a low wall (*yɛbɔg*) a yard or so in height and about the same in length, at the back of the *sapak*. This wall usually runs between the back of a kitchen or storeroom and a large bullet-shaped chamber from 7 to 10 feet high and 6 to 10 feet in diameter at the base. This is the granary (*buur*). One suffices for a small family like Ɔndieso's. A wealthier man with a more numerous household may have one principal granary and one or more smaller ones. A granary has only one opening, at the top, covered with a lid of tightly plaited thatch like an enormous hat.

In the granary, again, Tale architecture embodies a fundamental element in the structure of the domestic unit. A bird's-eye view of a Tale homestead would show the principal granary as standing roughly in the centre of the circle of rooms, rising like a beacon between that section of the homestead which in use, thought, and feeling is the domain of the men, and that section which forms the living-quarters and is ruled by the women. The granary is the pivot on which the smooth working of the domestic unit turns. It holds the millet and guinea corn which provide the staple food of the natives. Without this, life cannot be satisfactorily sustained from one harvest to the next, and the household cannot exist, let alone keep its unity. What a sufficiency of food means to the Tallensi has been described in our previous

[1] This is the complementary notion to that of 'polluting the room' described above, p. 28.

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volume.[1] The granary symbolizes all the sentiments and ideas, the apprehensions and joys which the struggle for food evokes in Taleland. It stands for the security of the domestic unit in this struggle. In the organization of the household its importance comes from the fact that it is the focus of the economic cohesion and stability of the domestic group. Into it goes the product of the joint labour of the household, from it comes their sustenance. In filling the granary and in the consumption of its contents, the labour of men, women, and children is equally essential, and the rights of all equally valid. When a joint family splits up, the commonest pretext is friction over grain supplies. The family which hives off does so on the ground that it needs its own, independent food-supply. 'They have each his own granary (*ba mara ba buur ba buur*)', is the formula summing up the economic relations of brothers occupying a single homestead but having separate households.

The granary belongs to the head of the house, the *yirdaana*. No one may enter it without his authorization, least of all his wife. A devoted and trusted wife may be allowed to descend (*sig*) into it to issue the grain (*loo ki*) for cooking if there is no suitable male within reach—Tale conventions are not rigidly complied with if doing so involves excessive and absurd inconvenience. But it would be scandalous if she did so on her own initiative. The contents of the granary are formally the property of the head of the household, to be distributed at his discretion. There is no other place in the homestead which is so rigorously private to him. Besides the grain for current consumption, he stores the seed for next year's crop there. He hides a particularly cherished object, or money which he wants to conceal from other members of the family, in his granary, secure in the knowledge that no one will dare to tamper with it there.

The *zɔŋ* enshrines—in both the physical and the ideal sense of this concept—the notion of the continuity of the lineage; the *buur* stands for the social personality of the *yirdaana*, as the centre of an independent domestic family, its economic fulcrum, its jural and ritual head, controller and representative. The position of the granary in the architectural pattern of the homestead corresponds to that of the head of the house in the structure of the family, as the unique link between its parts and the source of its unity.

Tallensi say that a man's soul (*sii*) is in his granary. Using the same phrase one says of a person, '*n siig mbe u ni*—my soul is in [drawn towards] him', meaning that one feels a special affinity with him. Among the Namoos the identification of a man with his granary is symbolized explicitly in the taboos that his first-born children have to observe.[2] A man's granary, his cap and tunic, his bow and quiver,

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. xi. Also M. and S. L. Fortes, 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', *Africa*, ix. 2, 1937.

[2] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. v.

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343 181 are the emblems of his individuality. They participate in it, for they are imbued with his body 'dirt (*dayət*)'—a concept which has a physiological facet, meaning the exuviae adhering to a man's garments, quiver, or other objects constantly handled by him, and a mystical facet implying the quintessence of his individuality. The Talis also acknowledge this complex association between a man and his granary and other intimate possessions, expressing it in analogous customs, in the routine of family life and in their ideals of family relations.

351 To enter the living-quarters of a homestead one climbs over the low dividing wall (*yɛbəg*) at the back of the *sapak* by means of a step (*bimbimər*) and descends, by a similar step on the other side, into an irregular courtyard (*dɛndɔŋo*, pl. *dɛndɔma*) of beaten gravel, which is surrounded by a number of rooms. According to the wealth, rank, or status of the *yirdaana* this *dɛndɔŋo* varies in size from about 20 to about 6 square yards.

592 593 342 351 This *dɛndɔŋo* belongs to the principal woman (*dugdaana*) of the house. The *dɛndɔma* of junior wives are smaller. In Ɔndieso's house the senior woman is his mother's surviving co-wife, whom he calls his 'younger mother' (*mapit*, lit. 'mother's younger sister'), and who has remained with him since the death of his father. Her rooms occupy roughly the left half of the homestead, facing inwards from the *sapak*. From this *dɛndɔŋo*, turning right between a small room beside the granary and a larger room straight ahead, one enters a similar *dɛndɔŋo* in the middle of another set of rooms, those of Ɔndieso's wife. These take up roughly the right half of the homestead, facing inwards. The *yirdaana*'s mother's (own mother, or proxy-mother) rooms always occupy the position of honour in the centre of the arc; his senior wife's (*pɔ'akpeem*) rooms lie on the right-hand side of these; his second wife's, or his younger brother's senior wife's rooms lie on the left, looking inwards. The rooms of the other wives of the head of the family or of his brothers are distributed as convenience dictates. For example, wives who are clan sisters will usually have adjoining quarters; wives who get on badly will be put in well-separated rooms. If none of a man's father's widows is living with him, and he has more than one wife, his senior wife occupies the central group of rooms, his second wife those on her right, and so forth. Generally the women's apartments all communicate with one another. But if a woman has a quarrelsome disposition or gets on badly with her co-wives for any other reason, her quarters will be separated from those of the next-door wife by a low party wall, to prevent undue trespassing by her co-wives or their children.

342 593 A woman's apartments make up a self-contained section in the homestead. This is her *dug* (pl. *dugət*). Basically *dug* means a single room, but it is extended to mean the single set of rooms belonging to one wife. In the Tale family every woman with children is entitled to her own *dug*. Women guard this right jealously, and if a man has not built separate quarters for his wife by the time that she has had her first child,

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she will become very discontented. A young wife sometimes runs off to her father's home because she thinks she ought to have her own *dug* and her husband has been dilatory about it; and she will refuse to return until he convinces her of his intention to build her *dug* immediately. The observance of this rule is an essential element in the structure of the domestic family. It is indispensable for the satisfactory working of the domestic economy and for the mutual adjustment of person to person. A wife's separate quarters stand for her relative autonomy as wife, mother and housekeeper, *vis-à-vis* the other women of the family.

As the head of the house is *yirdaana*, master of the house, so the senior woman of the house—his mother, or senior wife—is the *dugdaana*, the mistress of the rooms. Every woman is the *dugdaana* of her own apartments, but the mistress of the principal *dug* is the *dugdaana* of the whole house.

In a polygynous family, or what might be called a multicellular family, the senior *dugdaana* has more authority in domestic affairs, and more esteem in the eyes of the public than the other women of the household have. Whether she is the *yirdaana*'s mother or his senior wife, she is the central pillar of his domestic establishment, honorifically more than actively in the case of the former, actively as well as honorifically in the case of the latter.

One sign of this is that most of the ancestor and medicine shrines that are kept indoors rest in the *dɛndɔŋo* and rooms of the senior woman. They include a man's personal shrines, as well as those of which he is custodian as head of a lineage segment. Sacrifice is offered to these shrines in this *dɛndɔŋo*, the women and children of the family often taking part. A man's ancestors keep watch and ward both indoors and out over the things, the place, and the people most precious to him.

When a person dies he or she must not only be gathered to the ancestors, but must subsequently be ritually brought back, as a spirit, into the living quarters, the veritable home. The expression '*Kpeehu la dugni*—bring him [her] into the *dug*', used for this as well as the customary rites, make this clear.

The intimate domestic life of a family goes on mainly in the *dɛndɔŋo*. Meals are often cooked and always eaten there. Food is never cooked outside the homestead except for ritual or ceremonial purposes. A woman does much of her domestic work in her *dɛndɔŋo*. Her babies learn to crawl and to take their first steps there. She entertains guests and relatives, and receives her daughter's suitors there. When the crops are harvested they are spread out to dry in the *dɛndɔŋo* before being stored. A man often sits about in his wife's *dɛndɔŋo* when he has a leisurely manual task in hand. Youths and girls come to dance there when an elderly person's funeral is celebrated. And on pleasant nights, after a satisfying meal, men, women, and children sit there conversing or gossiping or asking riddles.

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592 A woman is entitled to have at least three rooms in her *dug*, a sleeping-room (*dakir*) a dry-season kitchen (*da'aŋ*) and a storeroom (*da'aŋboog*). Men of substance often allow their older wives a fourth room (*boog*), which always has a flat mud roof and serves as an extra storeroom and a guest-room, or as a room in which a daughter-in-law can be temporarily accommodated, or where the *yirdaana* can sit and talk to his visitors in the rainy season.

342 592 [352] The *dakir* is the largest room, usually 10 to 12 feet in diameter.[1] Here the woman sleeps with her young children; here her husband comes to her at night; here she is confined when she bears him a child; here she keeps her sleeping-mats and her few personal treasures; and here, if she is his senior wife, her husband's best cloth or tunic, his bow and quiver, and other personal belongings. Her husband and children have free access to her *dakir*. Other members of the family must generally ask her permission to enter it or a family quarrel will result. To enter a *dakir* one crawls through an arched doorway, 2 to 3 feet high and about the same in width. Inside darkness reigns, relieved only by the glimmer of light that enters under the eaves and through the doorway, or a small aperture high up in the wall.

343 592 A stretch of wall 2 or 3 feet long forms a shallow recess between the *dakir* and the unroofed dry-season kitchen (*da'aŋ*). Here one generally sees a bundle of firewood stacked in a corner, or, in the right season, a heap of shea nuts. The *da'aŋ* itself is horseshoe-shaped and smaller than a *dakir*—from 4 to 8 feet across the shorter axis and 6 to 9 feet across the longer axis. The doorway is usually about 4 feet high, so that one can go in and out easily, as domestic tasks require. As it is for use in dry weather only, it is open to the sky. After the harvest, millet and guinea-corn stalks are spread on top, partly as a shield from the sun but chiefly as a reserve of firewood. The cooking-hearth (*ɔɔrəg*), the water-pots (*kɔɔwoor*), the cooking-pots and dishes (*dɔɣat* and *laas*), the stirring-stick (*vugər*), and ladles (*bies*), lying about in none too orderly a fashion, show well the uses to which this room is put.

Adjoining the *da'aŋ* is the larger, roofed *da'aŋboog*, the storeroom and larder. This room often has a doorway leading into the *da'aŋ* and not into the *dɛndɔŋo*, for the greater convenience of the housewife. Here the housewife keeps her stocks of foodstuffs—her dried vegetables and condiments, the odd piece of dried fish or meat she has hoarded, a pot of millet, perhaps, which she acquired by her own efforts, and so forth—as well as the utensils she is not using, and any bulky articles belonging to her or other members of the family. Here she also cooks in the wet season. At a pinch it may be used as a sleeping-room for a visitor

[1] The diameters of a room are always discrepant, it may be by an inch or two or by as much as a foot, so that its base is never a perfect circle. The natives themselves do not notice this as it is due to their crude method of marking out the circle for the base with the foot.

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or adolescent son. The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* also serve as a sort of drawing-room. A guest who must be treated with respect is invited to step round to the kitchen to have his meal there in private, a suitor is told to go round to the girl's mother's kitchen to plead his suit with her.

The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* are the counterpart in the social sphere of a woman of the *zɔŋ*, cattle yard (*sapak*), and granary (*buur*) in that of a man. They mark off the economic field reserved for her and the social sphere in which she is supreme. Etiquette and convention show this, and, as in the case of the *zɔŋ* and the *buur*, ritual notions give expression to it and put the seal of mystical value on it. Women do not have ancestor shrines of their own. But in her storeroom an old woman keeps her *zaaloŋ*. This is a long rope net, holding a neat pile of polished calabash dishes (*ŋman*) of all sizes which she has accumulated during her married life. One of these is her *kumpiog*, 'basket of death'. It is the symbol of her mortal existence.[1] When she dies it stands in her *dɛndɔŋo* and is eventually taken, with the most meticulous ceremonial care, to her eldest surviving daughter. In this room also she keeps her main storage pot (*dɔk*). It is to her what a man's granary is to him. One sign of this is the rule that her first-born daughter may never, in the mother's lifetime, open it. She does so ritually when her mother's funeral is completed.[2]

Lastly, there is the grinding-room (*neer*), a vastly important item in the organization of the domestic economy, and in the personal relations of the women of a family with one another. It is always a small, low room, 3 or 4 feet in diameter, with a doorway barely large enough to admit a person on hands and knees. A hole under the eaves, the size of a soup plate, lets in a glimmer of light. A waist-high table built of mud, in the hollow surface of which two nether grindstones are embedded, takes up most of the interior. In a small homestead like Ɔndieso's one *neer* is enough, and his mother and wife share it, though the older woman seldom has occasion to use it as her daughter-in-law does most of the cooking for the family. If there are several women in a household, more than one grinding-room is needed. One reason for this is purely mechanical. Grinding the grain for the main meal, in the evening, takes at least an hour, in the period of plenty. The women and girls do this at any time of the day, but prefer to do it in the afternoon. Thus more than one woman may want to use the *neer* at the same time. But there is another reason as well. Co-wives are apt to squabble over the use of the grinding-room, especially if they do not get on harmoni-

[1] The calabash is the commonest domestic utensil and it symbolizes a woman in many contexts. For instance, when a man's wife bears a child he will send to tell her parents; and the messenger reports, with the euphemism the Tallensi always resort to on such occasions, that the woman has born 'a calabash' (*ŋman*) if it is a girl, or a 'staff' (*duor*) if it is a boy—the staff being a hunting-weapon carried by men.

[2] Cf. Ch. VIII below.

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ously, for it is connected with that precise equality of grain rations to which co-wives are entitled and about which they are extremely touchy. To obviate these quabbles, which sometimes kindle suppressed antagonisms into violent quarrels, a man usually provides a separate grinding-room for each with a fractious disposition.

In a large [illegible]red house there is a great deal of free and easy communication between the different *dugət*. Children in particular go about freely from one woman's quarters (*dug*) to another's, since they are related to all by actual or derived filial ties. The men, too, are free of all the *dugət*, for the women are all either their 'mothers' (*manam*)—own mothers, or fathers' other wives, their wives (*pɔɣaba*)—own wives or brothers' wives, or daughters-in-law (*sampɔɣaba*)—own sons' or brothers' sons' wives. Men and their children, members of the same lineage, are the 'owners' of the homestead. They have determinate rights, duties, and sentiments towards all the women. The women are more circumspect, especially about the *dug* of a co-wife (*nentaa*) or husband's mother (*daŋaampɔk*) if their personal relations are not too cordial; for their social inter-relations are indirect and contingent on their marital ties, unless, as sometimes happens, they belong to the same or to linked clans and have, in consequence, a direct bond of solidarity. In spite of this, the general impression left by a visit to a large house is one of friendly co-operation unsullied by jealous distinctions.

The natives themselves have no illusions on this score. They do not take it for granted that all the women of a family will get on well with one another. They recognize clearly that the spatial differentiation of each *dug* in a house corresponds to its structural differentiation; and with this goes a certain degree of domestic privacy and a differentiation of sentiment and of emotional attachments that may become a source of friction. The *dug* (that is, a woman and her children by one man) constitutes the irreducible unit of Tale social structure, both jurally and morally, held together by the strongest social and emotional bonds conceivable to the Tallensi. The *dug* is the Talən's conceptual model of infrangible solidarity, and his emotional symbol of unstinted nourishment, of complete security, and of parental devotion. It is the prototype, also, of the closely integrated matri-segment within the formally unified patrilineal lineage, as has been shown in our previous volume.[1]

In general, as the foregoing suggests, a man has no room of his own. He keeps his personal belongings in his wife's *dug* and eats and sleeps there, or in his various wives' rooms in turn, if he has more than one. Chiefs, old men, and rich men sometimes have rooms of their own, usually in their senior wives' *dɑndɔna*, where they keep their more bulky personal belongings and to which they can retire if they want privacy. The Gəlibdaana and the Gorogo Yikpemdaana, as we have seen, make an exaggerated display of their private rooms. But as a matter of fact,

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. xii.

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vanity apart, they do require ample storage-room for the large quantities of clothes, the saddlery and trappings of their horses, the innumerable odds and ends of European origin, and many articles of native production which they have accumulated by purchase or gift. Their good fortune is exceptional. Others content themselves with small and modest private rooms. Leatherworkers and blacksmiths also often have private rooms where they keep their tools and the materials of their craft.

No special provision is made for young children or girls. They live in their mothers' rooms. An unmarried young man usually has a special room of his own, essentially a sleeping-room (*doo*), in his mother's *dug*; and if there are several adolescent boys in a family a *doo* may be built for them in one of the women's *dugət*.

The construction of the dwelling-house shows graphically the division of the domestic family into two complementary spheres. On the one hand, we have the sphere in which the patricentral *yir* predominates; on the other, that in which the matricentral *dug* has priority. It is the line of cleavage between descent from the father (*ba dɔɣam*) and descent from the mother (*ma dɔɣam*), principles which are antithetical in form but complementary in function in the domestic organization. Maternal origin supplies the canon of differentiation within the family, paternal descent the principle of integration. In the polygynous joint family, which is the natives' ideal domestic unit, the constituent *dugət* are relatively autonomous in relation to one another, and in certain respects even mutually opposed. The *yir* combines them into a single integral unit, but they are not swallowed up; they retain their specific identity according to maternal origin. The *yir*, then, is the complementary factor to the *dug*; it is also the synthesis of a group of *dugət* at a higher level of organization. This, as has been shown in our previous book, is both the structural model and the social matrix of the lineage system.

The Developmental Cycle of the Joint Family

We have found it convenient to fix our analysis of the Tale homestead by reference to the simplest kind of independent domestic unit. But the elementary family, as we have already remarked, is neither the ideal nor the most common type of independent domestic unit in Taleland; for the typical substratum of a domestic group is not the individual breadwinner but an effective minimal lineage.[1] The domestic group grows, changes, and dissolves with the growth cycle of this lineage, and a particular elementary family is only an episode in this cycle. The structure of the Tale family cannot be divorced from its existence in time. We have to examine it as a process. At any given time we find domestic families at every stage of development in a Tale community.

[1] Cf. p. 9 above for a definition of this unit. A full analysis of its constitution is given in *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. xii.

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affairs, their absence does not disturb jural or ritual relations centred in the family. It is like a tree which remains a tree morphologically and physiologically even if some of its minor branches have been lopped off.

The foregoing is true of the great majority of Tale families. The structure of the normal family can still be accurately described without reference to contact influence, in spite of the fact that a few families can be found in every settlement which have been badly mutilated by the prolonged absence abroad of their male members. Admittedly the norms of family relations have not remained completely insulated from these influences. With the ease of modern communications and the openings for work abroad, young people have incentives and opportunities which their fathers never had for resisting the authority of their elders and for breaking away from the family for a longer or shorter time. But as yet these new incentives and opportunities appear only as modifying factors in the play of the culturally defined family relations. They do not represent a conflicting set of norms, creating divisions within Tale society. For instance, a young man who is still jurally a minor cannot at will leave the domestic family to which he belongs by birth and set up an independent household. He can do so only in compliance with the moral rules and social conventions that regulate the fission of families. In fact, the motive to break away will only arise when certain standard changes take place in the composition of the domestic unit to which he belongs, or when he reaches a stage of social maturity which precipitates certain standard tensions between him and the head of the unit. The alternative for a young man who, in these days, hankers after independence is to leave the community until such time as he is prepared to settle down. He has to seek work abroad, in Ashanti or the Colony, or in the service of the white man nearer home. He is assured of a cordial welcome home whenever he decides to return, whether it be for a few weeks only or permanently. But if he makes up his mind to settle down at home it can only be within the existing social framework, and this means complying with the norms of family organization. There is no other way by which he can get married or acquire a house site or farm-land in his natal settlement, let alone play his part in community affairs. Hitherto these norms have been so well maintained that no returned emigrant has been known to flout them.

Summing up, we see that the Tale domestic system has three morphological strata. It consists of a segmentary economic formation—households of different dimensions and degrees of economic self-sufficiency—embraced within a segmentary jural and ceremonial formation—domestic units not necessarily congruent with households grouped under family heads—and this again contained within a system of residential grouping in which the changes of phase in domestic structure are crystallized.

in places like Kumasi, I can say with certainty that the great majority are under 30.

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592 A domestic unit is most clearly identified by the fact that it has a single common gateway. Though the three domains of domestic organization are not absolutely congruent, the commonest residential unit is the single household, which is also a single though not necessarily completely independent jural and ceremonial unit.[1]

596 We have been considering the typical development of the joint family as a process of successive fission and dispersion. But the contrary process of reintegration also plays an important part in this development. The changes in the composition of the joint or expanded family that lead to changes in the status and social roles of its senior male members cause it to split up in the circumstances that have been indicated, but they lead to a fusion of independent units in other circumstances. The decisive factors are jural status in the lineage, with which go rights over patrimonial land, and economic capacity.

Let us take a sample case. When Katinoo died (see genealogy, p. 68) his eldest son Duun became head of the effective minimal lineage and joint family and inherited the patrimonial farm-land. Duun and his full brother Baa continued to occupy their father's homestead, using only one gateway. After a while—four or five years, perhaps—Baa asked to be allowed to farm for himself as his children were growing up. He still occupied the same homestead as Duun, but his quarters were separated from those of Duun by a high party wall (*beŋar*), he had his own granary, farmed for himself, and was solely responsible for supplying the food and other wants of his wives and children. The domestic family now consisted of two households.

[1] The following table shows this clearly:

162 *Table showing the Distribution of Domestic Families (= Gateways) and Households (= Units of Food Economy) in relation to Homesteads*

Domestic families per homestead	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Totals
No. of homesteads	34	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	44
No. of domestic families	34	10	12	0	5	0	0	0	61
Households per homestead	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Totals**
No. of homesteads	25	11	4	2	0	1	0	1	44
No. of households	25	22	12	8	0	6	0	8	81

(Mean number of persons: per homestead, 14·5; per domestic family, 10·4.)

The 61 domestic families of our sample occupy 44 homesteads. On the average there are 1·4 gateways (i.e. 1·4 domestic families) per homestead; but more than half of the 61 families occupy their own homesteads, with one gateway apiece. There are 81 households in the sample group, an average of 1·9 households per homestead and 1·3 households per domestic family. But nearly a third of these households are single domestic families dwelling in their own homesteads.

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602 interests and solidarity. This applies to women as well, if in a slightly lesser degree. Moreover, close cognates of different clans keep in touch sufficiently to know a great deal about one another's personal life.

592 In spite of this, domestic privacy is well guarded, for the essential life of the family goes on inside the homestead. There is a basis for this 262 in the rules of residence and in the domestic economy. Residential 576 autonomy is an index of economic autonomy. A household produces almost the whole of the food-supplies it consumes. Its neighbours, however closely related they are, can guess as to the sufficiency but cannot know the exact quantity of a household's food-supplies. Only the head of the household knows this. As we have seen, a major factor of differentiation between and within domestic units is the organization of food production and consumption. One can see this any evening when the chief meal of the day is eaten. It is prepared by the women and consumed by all the members of the household producing the grain. Meals are not regularly shared between separate households, even within the same domestic unit. The correct thing is for a person to take his usual meals at home amidst his own family. Most Tallensi would starve rather than deliberately scrounge (*bimh*) a meal off a kinsman who farms separately, even if the latter lives in the same homestead. Tallensi would think it a disgrace if their children made a habit of going to feed with neighbours, as is the custom in some primitive societies. A hungry child comes to its mother for food; it will not go to a neighbouring homestead in the hope of getting something to eat.

576 The etiquette of social intercourse indicates as clearly the degree to which domestic privacy is taken for granted. A visitor always announces 574 himself at the gateway. A kinsman, neighbour, or friend calls out, 521 informally, the name of the person he wishes to see, a stranger calls out *gafarra* ('excuse me'), and waits to be asked in. At night the family is usually gathered together inside its own homestead. In fine weather, especially if the moon is bright, men, women, and children spread themselves out in the senior woman's *dendɔŋo*, relaxing after the evening meal. If it is a large family a visitor will find them sprawling at ease in what seems a completely higgledy-piggledy huddle. The infants sleep in their mothers' arms, the smaller children doze on the hard gravel floor, the older children chatter in twos and threes, the grown-ups and the young men and girls talk of the day's happenings, yarn and gossip, or play at riddles. Generally, several different conversations go on at the same time. There may be visitors, a neighbour come on some business or suitors come courting one of the girls. A visitor can be seen in entire privacy. He or she is taken into one of the rooms, and no one would be so lacking in manners as to intrude. A young man visits his sweetheart [584] thus in her own home, and is entertained by her in complete privacy. Other members of the family know all about it, of course, but the sweethearts need not fear being disturbed.

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581 which cannot be done without the assistance of women. He can com-
593 mand other services from her. For instance, nowadays he can send her to buy grain for him in distant markets and sell it for him in the home market; and he can ask for many little services that make life more comfortable for him. A man has a right to these services; but it is a right limited by the principle of reciprocity.[1] In return a man is bound to protect and care for his wife, in particular to provide her with a home, with food, and with curative treatment if she is ill.

593 There is an obvious material basis for the economic reciprocity of husband and wife. Primarily it is a function of the system of economic
●592 co-operation, by means of which the household satisfies its material wants. The head of the family owns the land and the livestock from which all draw their sustenance. The men do the heavy work of farming and care for the livestock. The women perform the tasks already mentioned. Within this subsistence unit the rule of reciprocity of economic rights and duties governs the economic relations of parent and child, of brother and brother, as well as those of husband and wife. For it is an application of the wider principle that all those who pool their labour in the common task of providing food and shelter for the household are entitled, severally, to a just share in the product of their common labour.

593 The authority of husband over wife in the matter of economic duties and services is tempered, also, by a principle that really follows as a
421 logical corollary upon the principle just stated. The products of individual industry and enterprise belong to the individual, subject to the nominal over-right of anyone who has authority over him or her, in particular, of the head of the family. The rule applies to all property relations between the members of the family. Thus, as soon as a wife acquires a *dug* of her own she begins to have a certain degree of economic autonomy, and this increases with the passage of time, as her children become more and more able to do without her regular care. She has her own vegetable plot allocated to her by her husband. She often has a ground-nut plot of her own, which she cultivates herself. She has her small private store of grain, obtained by gift from her father or brothers or other kinsmen. Her vegetables, her ground-nuts, and her grain do not go into the pool of family resources. They do, however, serve to supplement these resources; for it is a woman's duty to provide the vegetable food, and it would be unthinkable for her not to use other supplies she may possess to feed her children and her husband in time of scarcity. But if her private supplies are not required for this purpose she can dispose of them as she pleases. She can exchange them for money or goods, or use them to give hospitality to her own kin or guests. The same rule holds for such things as shea fruit and shea butter, which
[437] it is a woman's duty to provide for the household. Thus, it is common for women to barter surplus shea nuts for household utensils, and these are entirely their own property.

[1] Cf. p. 213 below.

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other way round. These involve not individual economic or social interests but the common interests of the lineage. If a man has to answer a charge of having abducted another man's wife, or meet a demand for the payment of bride-price or the surrender of the custody of a child, his 'brothers' and 'fathers' of the same inner lineage will rally round him unanimously. For marriage affairs (*pɔŋadir ycla*) involve the common interests of the whole lineage. The observer cannot deduce from the opinions or actions of any member of the inner lineage, in such a situation, whether he is the full (*soog*) brother or the paternal (*sunzɔ*) brother, or a more distant classificatory brother or father of the main actor.

The differences of degree in the solidarity of siblings is most apparent in residential, economic, and domestic arrangements. So if one asks a man whom he lives with and he replies 'I share a homestead with my older brother (*man ni m-bier la kab kpeerɔme'*—lit. 'I and my older brother enter together'), one can be certain that the older brother referred to is not more distantly related to him than a father's half-brother's son. But the term *bier* has a different connotation in marriage affairs. For instance, Yin's son's father-in-law came one day to see Yin about the payment of his daughter's bride-price. There was a long and at moments acrimonious argument, with the intermediary (*pɔŋasama*) acting as conciliator. At length Yin said: 'I agree to your terms; but of course I must first consult my older brothers (*biernam*).' Everybody understood that what Yin meant was that he should first have to obtain the formal consent of the elders of his inner lineage.

As we have learnt before, generation differences are not reckoned beyond the limits of the inner or at most medial lineage. Beyond this range, therefore, all clanswomen are called sisters (*tap*) and all clansmen who are one's contemporaries or one's own siblings' contemporaries are described as siblings. In relation to them the pattern of sentiment and conduct that holds between true siblings only comes into action *vis-à-vis* non-clansmen, and then in a very attenuated form. It is a question chiefly of united action and mutual loyalty in the service of the corporate interests of the maximal lineage or clan. So any man will come to the assistance of a clansman in an argument or fight with a man of another clan, irrespective of the rights or wrongs of the case. This is vividly seen in hunting or fishing battues. It is a very common thing for two or three men to lay claim to having killed an animal, especially if no arrow is found embedded in the animal's flesh. Then the clansmen of the claimants rally round them and their dispute turns into a violent altercation between two or three solid phalanxes of hunters. As we have previously narrated,[1] a famous war of the old days began in this way. Similarly, market brawls occasionally arise from a man's clansmen coming to his support in an argument. The commonest

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. xiii.

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105 THE DOMESTIC ORGANIZATION. Tale domestic institutions are very elaborate, and the organization of domestic life is subject to a considerable range of variation due to such factors as the economic position, size and age of the unit, the temperament and character of individuals, the social status of the senior male members, the distribution of economic and ritual specialization (craftsmen, diviners &c.), and so forth. To evaluate the full influence of these factors requires a mass of statistical information which we have not been able to obtain as yet; we must be content with merely indicating its range.

Tale society is essentially democratic; but differences of wealth are prominent. Chiefs and headmen, in virtue of the services they command, cultivate greater areas than any commoner, own much more live stock and have twice and three times as many wives. Both in its structure and in the organization of its domestic life, a chief's compound conforms to the same cultural pattern as the compound of the poorest plebeian; but it is economically entirely atypical. In every settlement, also, there are a few men of wealth considerably above the average. They always have a sufficiency of food, even in the leanest years. Chiefs, headmen, and wealthy men have therefore been excluded from the discussion in this paper.

592 596 341 Tale social organization has a well-defined spatial basis. The unit of residence is a mud compound (*yir*—house) inhabited by a joint family consisting of a group of men of close patrilineal kinship, their wives and children. Its architecture is significantly correlated to the structure and organization of the joint family at the particular phase it has reached in its development. One compound in three—14 out of 40, to be exact—has two or more entrance gateways (*zanor*),[1] each corresponding to a completely self-contained dwelling, and independent social unit consisting of one or more households. The plural entrance compound represents a stage in the process of segmentation through which the joint family passes in the course of about three generations, and which ends in complete fission and the setting up of several independent compounds.

592 596 The main gate is always owned by the head of the joint family (*yirdaan*, owner of the house) the most senior (*kpeem*) of the group of

[1] Statistics quoted here and in subsequent paragraphs are derived from a sample of 40 compounds selected at random from a sociological census we made at Tongo.

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male agnates. He is *yirdaan* by virtue of indisputable succession which carries with it ritual responsibilities for the whole joint family, legal and moral duties and rights and valuable economic privileges. His younger brothers and his sons share his dwelling as a rule, ortho-cousins or nephews occasionally. Everything depends on factors such as those previously enumerated when it comes to the constitution of a particular compound. But in general, genealogical distance imposes corresponding spatial and social arrangements. Thus, the secondary gate of a plural gate compound[1] is usually owned by an ortho-cousin or nephew (classificatory brother or son) of the *yirdaan*, except for the special case of a man's first-born son.[2]

The single dwelling or the single-gate compound is the habitation of one or more households, each consisting of an adult male, his wife (or wives), and his children. A householder may have younger unmarried brothers or sisters or an old mother dependent on him. Every married man is a householder, but households vary greatly in status according to their degree of social and economic differentiation within the joint family. This is determined not only by the stage of development it has reached, but also by kinship factors and by those individual social and psychological characteristics which we have referred to before. A newly married man, for example, is to all intents and purposes part of the household to which he was attached prior to his marriage, but he has a small degree of autonomy which increases from year to year.

A newly married wife has a room in the quarters of her husband's mother, if she is alive, or of his senior wife. In due course, however, whether it be a man's first or later wife, he must build her separate quarters. Hence, in a well-differentiated household every wife has her own quarters (*dug*) partitioned off from those of her co-wives or her mother-in-law. Here she and her children—the primary family—live, and here she is supreme mistress. A woman's quarters consists

[1] Two gates are usual, three gates infrequent, and more than three gates found only in exceptional circumstances.

[2] It is taboo for the head of a compound and his first-born son to continue to use a single entrance after the latter has married and founded a family, though this taboo is never enforced until the younger man's children approach adolescence. But few men live long enough to see their first-born sons make their own gateways.

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own family. She may, as an act of grace, give some of this food to her husband or to a co-wife with whom she is on friendly terms; but she is not compelled to do so. A junior householder thus augments the food supply for his own wives and children. If he comes into possession [431] of a large amount of grain by his own exertions he will generally make a present of a small quantity to the head of the unit to which he belongs; but, again, this is an act of goodwill, not an obligation. A kind-hearted head of a compound may occasionally present a meagre dish of grain to the wife of a younger head of a self-supporting unit, if they are obviously on the verge of starvation; otherwise, self-supporting units in the same compound never assist one another with grain, in the ordinary course of events.

There are other more incalculable means by which food is brought 602 into the household and family. Cereals are sometimes obtained during 431 the hunger months by women from their paternal kinsmen. A 222 marriageable daughter, again, means a succession of suitors bringing 262 gifts of money, guinea-fowls, and various other comestibles to her mother. Wild sources of food are fully exploited. Fruits of the shea-tree (*ta'ay: butyrospermum parkii*) save many a family from the worst straits of hunger, as does the pulp of the dawa-dawa (*doo: parkia filicordea*) pods. These trees have an enormous economic value, as will be evident later. The baobab-tree (*to'o: adansonia digitata*) has a fruit with a floury, sweetish pulp which is relished much as sweetmeats are by ourselves, and its leaves are used to make soup. It is generally found as a shade-tree outside a compound, and women readily get permission from the head of the compound to pluck the leaves. Leaves of the local elm (*nuom: celtis integrifolia*) are also used for soup.[1] Some grasses and fungi serve this purpose too, and small children, who are adepts at foraging for themselves, can often be seen out in groups collecting them.

From the table quoted above it will be seen that one man, on the 592 average, supports himself, 1·2 women, and 1·2 children, over the age of infancy—roughly 3·4 people; but it is clear from the sociological outline given above that any such estimates hold only very approximately in view of the many supplementary sources of grain supply,

[1] We have seen elm-trees in *togbaas* (sacred groves) and in the bush (where of course, any one can pluck the leaves) but not as shade trees in front of compounds.

2/1 [See cat. 116, p. 241 — Analyst]

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and also, as we shall see, the many unpredictable modes of consumption of the grain (e.g. in recompensing collective labour, *vide infra*).[1]

MEAT AND FISH. Meat (*nmii*) is subject to even greater fluctuations of supply than grain owing to uncontrollable sources. Every compound possesses some live stock, if it be only a few fowls and guinea-fowls. A well-to-do compound may have a cow or two, even several cows, or a couple of donkeys, but the ordinary man usually comes into possession of these animals only in the form of bride-wealth, which will as likely as not be used immediately to pay a debt or, more rarely, to make a special and urgent sacrifice. In any case, a cow is never slaughtered specifically for food[2] by the average man. We heard of two donkeys being slaughtered in order to sell the meat by a couple of young men out for profit. This was vigorously denounced by the Chief, and was not repeated. As a rule beef is obtained from sacrifices to the ancestor spirits, always made by men of senior status, and from animals offered during funeral ceremonies, donkey-meat only from the latter offerings. The carcase is usually divided up among a large number of people in accordance with kinship status. An elder may obtain a whole leg of a bull, but he will sub-divide it among the compounds or households subordinate to him. Thus, in the long run, the share of a single household comes to a very small quantity, often only a few ounces. But nothing is wasted; the whole carcase, including all the viscera, is consumed.

Sheep and goats are owned by all but the poorest; but again, no one would wantonly slaughter an animal for food. In addition to sacrifices and funerals, there is a number of formal occasions on which one of these animals must be killed, e.g. as an act of hospitality to a mother-in-law or a very great friend. Corresponding to their lesser value and much greater abundance, sheep and goats are sacrificed in larger numbers than cows, often by men of junior status. The

[1] Mr. Lynn, *op. cit.* finds that 1 man supports 3·7 people on the average, on 2·03 acres of farmed land. In addition to the sources of error mentioned in the text, it should be noted that the simplicity of Tale agricultural technology makes it possible for quite small boys to be of occasional, if somewhat casual, assistance in the fields.

[2] The Chief of Tongo slaughtered a cow for his wives and elders at the New Year (*Daa*) Festival in 1934, the only case of the kind we came across.

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184 867 463 The specific genealogical links of a family act in a similar way. In the extreme case, they may alter a person's whole life. The story of Puvələmra is typical, though such occurrences are not usual. He was a Kpatia man whose parents had died in his boyhood. For special reasons he had come to live with his mother's brother at Gbizug. There he grew up, and when I met him, a man of 35–40, he was to all intents a Gbizug man, a complete partisan of that lineage, professing its ideology, subject to its ritual restrictions, and practising the craft of leatherwork as he had learnt it from his mother's brother. He will probably return to Kpatia when he succeeds to his patrimony, there to be assimilated to a rather different ritual system, but transmitting to his sons and grandsons the art of leatherwork and the habits of industry learnt from his mother's brother. Many Tale lineages trace peculiar features of their residence or kinship, or the possession of special ritual, medical, or technological knowledge, to an ancestor with a history like that of Puvələmra.

592 622 861 Finally, the phase of family history coinciding with an early period of a person's education—the status of one or more senior members of his family, or the holding of ritual or political office by any of them —may have a significant differentiating influence on his or her social space. The homestead of a lineage or clan head is the focus of intercommunication both of the constituent parts of that grouping, the sublineages and joint families, and of the lineage or clan with its neighbours, not only in secular affairs but also in ritual matters. This is even more evident with people who hold offices. There is a constant coming and going of people at the house of a chief or clan-head: a complainant has brought a case to lay before the chief; the elders of the clan have come to consult him about the rain; somebody's daughter recently married has deserted her husband and the indignant son-in-law is brought to the clan-head to discuss the affair; a distant cognatic kinsman has brought a goat to sacrifice to the spirit of the supreme ancestor of the lineage; orders have been received that the young men must turn out for rest-house repairs in two or three days; and so forth. Transactions of this sort generally take place in public and the children of the house are always avid listeners. If any one has to be summoned or a message delivered a youth or a small boy is sent.

184 867 The members of such a house, especially those who have reached